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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 002179

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DEPT. FOR PM AND L

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/23/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [IT](#) [NATO](#) [FORCES](#) [IN](#) [ITALY](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY: SIGONELLA TA APPROVAL CRITICAL TO MIL-MIL
RELATIONSHIP

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Emil Skodon. Reasons 1.4 b and d.

1. (C) Post wishes to highlight the importance to US-Italy relations of rapid approval in Washington of the just-concluded negotiations on the Sigonella Technical Arrangement. The 1995 "Shell Agreement" stipulates that the US and Italy will negotiate technical arrangements (TA) for each Italian facility with a US force presence. In mid-June, after 9 years of negotiation the first TA for Sigonella Naval Air Station in Sicily was completed and sent by EUCOM to Washington for final approval. Expeditious approval and designation of authority to sign the Sig TA are critical to keeping our excellent mil-mil relationship functioning optimally. The Sig TA is expected to be the example from which TAs for the other bases in Italy are crafted. For several years the Italians, up to and including the D/CHOD, have been anxious to close on the Sig TA to the point that inability to conclude the negotiation threatened to become a serious bilateral irritant. Italian officials told us bluntly that their willingness to approve various US military requests depended on getting the Sig TA completed.

2. (C) Now, with the text in Washington for approval, Italy will continue to view our action on the Sig TA as a litmus test of our seriousness and our respect for the terms of our basing in Italy. Considerable Italian frustration over the long Sig TA process visibly dissipated when the Italians learned at the June 16-17 Joint Military Commission meeting in Aviano that the document had been sent Washington for approval. The Italians worry that the document may languish for months in Washington waiting for approval. We should not let that happen. Italy will begin staffing the document on their side (a process IDGS says should take no more than a few weeks) only once the US approves the text.

3. (C) Having gotten this ball to the goal line, we need Washington to quickly move it in for the score. Post urges Department, OSD and Joint Staff offices involved to give rapid and favorable consideration to approving the Sig TA.

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